Diversity Newsletter

Topics for Teachers

Spring 2011 Volume 5

BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

Ministry of Education

Welcome to the Spring 2011 edition of **Diversity Newsletter: Topics for Teachers.**

This edition offers information about ESL services, the diversity of students in ESL programs, additional programs for immigrant and refugee students, and resources to help plan for diverse English language learners.

Please email ideas for future topics to:

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Settlement Workers in Schools

Newly-arrived immigrant students and their families have unique settlement and integration needs. Beginning in 2007, a number of school districts in British Columbia began to employ settlement workers in schools (SWIS) to address these needs. These specialists can assist families and school staff, helping to ease the transition of newcomers to school in BC.

The mandate of settlement workers is to increase the success of immigrant and refugee children in BC schools and communities. Through SWIS, these students learn to understand what it's like to live in Canada and to appreciate the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship. Specific information about this program can be found at: www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/service_providers/programs/settlement_program/stream1/swis.page

There are 21 BC school districts involved in the SWIS program. These are districts with high numbers of newcomer immigrant and refugee students: Abbotsford, Burnaby, Central Okanagan, Chilliwack, Conseil scolaire francophone, Coquitlam, Delta, Greater Victoria, Langley, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, Mission, Nanaimo-Ladysmith, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Okanagan-Similkameen, Peace River North, Prince George, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver, and West Vancouver.

If you are working in one of the SWIS districts and do not know your SWIS contact or coordinator, please call your board office for information.

Settlement Workers in Communities

Immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies throughout British Columbia also have settlement workers to address the settlement and integration needs of immigrant families. Many of these community agencies have connections with schools and can provide information to families where SWIS workers are not on school staff. They can also help families outside of school.

The **Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA)** provides a listing of all associated immigrant- and refugee-serving community agencies in BC at: www.amssa.org

Phone: (604)718-2780 in Vancouver

1-888-355-5560 outside Vancouver

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English as a Second Language (ESL) Services

Some students' primary language is not English and therefore they may need support to access the BC curriculum. ESL services enable these students to develop their individual potential within BC's school system.

Some students who speak dialects of English that are significantly different from Standard English may need similar services to access the curriculum.

Supplementary ESL funding from the Ministry of Education provides for English as a second language services in BC schools. It also funds parallel French programs in francophone schools for those students who do not speak French. This funding:

- Supports a transitional supplementary service
- Enables students to participate in learning activities in English (French in francophone schools) and to access the curriculum
- Helps students to develop their individual potential within BC's school system
- Provides boards with additional funding of $1,340 per student for up to five years
- Is not targeted by the Ministry

For a student to be reported in the ESL program so the district may receive supplemental funding, all of the following conditions must be met and documented:

- An annual assessment of English language proficiency has determined that the student's use of English is sufficiently different from Standard English
- An annual instructional plan is designed to meet the needs of the student
- Additional ESL services must be provided
- The specialized ESL services must be documented in a list or schedule
- Progress in the acquisition of English is reported to parents in regular reporting periods and evidence of reports is documented
- An ESL specialist is involved in planning and delivering services

For details see page 7 of the ***ESL Policy and Guidelines*** *at: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/esl/policy/guidelines.pdf*

An English language learner (ESL student) is a person who is in the process of acquiring English and has a primary language or dialect other than English.

Newcomers' Guide to Resources and Services

Translated into multiple languages, this guide provides a wealth of useful information for newcomers to BC, including information about health care, the school system, employment, and community services:

http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/service_providers/publications_and_reports/publications/index.page?

Integration *in the educational program for students in ESL means these English language learners are included in educational settings with their peers and are provided with the necessary adaptations to enable them to be successful in those settings.*

Understanding Cultural Diversity

Teachers, students, and families all bring their beliefs, expectations, and practices to the education process. When the process involves a student from another cultural background, educators should explore the student's cultural experiences, values and attitudes in order to effectively assess the student's learning needs.

Every culture is dynamic, with shared beliefs, values, and experiences among people from a given cultural group as well as widespread diversity within the group. Whether students from different cultural backgrounds are born in or outside of Canada, this diversity prohibits generalized assumptions about individual beliefs and responses to specific circumstances.

The degree of adaptation to a new life in Canada does not necessarily compare with the length of residence in this country and integration in aspects of Canadian life does not imply a rejection of traditional ways.

Knowing some of the key characteristics of the traditional cultures among us may improve mutual understanding and ability to work effectively with students from different cultures. To help understand the backgrounds of immigrant students, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada has a very useful website containing information about almost every country in the world:

www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/countryinsights-apercuspays-eng.asp

English as a Second Dialect

Some Aboriginal students speak dialects of English that differ significantly from Standard English. An assessment of their level of English language proficiency may indicate they need English as a second dialect (ESD) support. ESD is also funded through ESL supplemental funding.

The following descriptors about Aboriginal peoples can help to shape educational programming for Aboriginal ESD students—from ***BC First Nations Studies 12*** at: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/pdfs/social_studies/2006bcfns12.pdf :

- Aboriginal peoples have complex, dynamic, evolving cultures that have adapted to changing world events and environments.
- To understand Aboriginal issues, it is necessary to understand and appreciate that all contemporary events have their roots in both oral and written history.
- Aboriginal views of knowledge and learning may differ from those of other societies.
- The resilience and durability of Aboriginal cultures serve as a basis upon which Aboriginal peoples can build a brighter future.
- Aboriginal culture and history have an integral place in the evolution of BC and Canadian society.
- Aboriginal peoples play a key role in the determination of future prosperity for BC, Canada, and the world.

"Students benefit from seeing their own history, literature, and culture reflected in their school experiences."

From ***ESL Policy and Guidelines*** at: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/esl/policy/guidelines.pdf

A Warm and Welcoming Environment

Teachers have the opportunity to create a warm, friendly, and safe environment with an appropriate educational program and opportunities for interaction and understanding.

For information about how students adjust to a new culture and how school staff can set the stage for a smooth transition of newcomers (immigrants and refugees) into the school and classroom, see ***Students from Refugee Backgrounds - A Guide for Teachers and Schools*** at:

www.bced.gov.bc.ca/esl/refugees_teachers_guide.pdf

Myth-busting ESL Funding and Services

Understanding the process for allocation of ESL funding will help schools provide the best services for your students.

Myth 1:

To qualify for ESL services, students must come from specific cultural backgrounds.

Fact:

Cultural background is not a determinant of eligibility for ESL service. Eligibility is first determined through an assessment of English language proficiency.

Myth 2:

In recent years, funding for ESL programs has been cut.

Fact:

Since 2002, the ministry has increased ESL supplementary funding by 22 percent from $1,100 per student per year to $1,340 per student per year.

Fact: Students reported to the ministry as ESL outperform non-ESL students on school completion.

Myth 3:

The number of students needing ESL support has increased dramatically in the last decade.

Fact:

Over the last ten years, ESL enrolment has remained relatively stable. Due to decline in overall student enrolment, the ESL population has increased by about one percent of the entire provincial student population. The percentage of immigrant students in ESL has decreased by about eight percent of the total ESL population, while the number of Aboriginal students has increased.

Myth 4:

ESL services need not be provided continuously throughout the school year.

Fact:

There must be continuous ESL support throughout the ten months of each school year. It may be appropriate to vary the level of service based on the student's educational needs.

Myth 5:

Students in ESL cannot also be reported to the ministry for special needs supplementary funding.

Fact:

Some English language learners enrol in schools with previously diagnosed disabilities. Sometimes issues emerge as students progress in their educational program. In either case, a student in ESL may qualify for additional special needs programming if the special need is properly assessed and documented. See the **Special Education Policy** at: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/special_ed.htm

Myth 6:

International students qualify for publicly-funded ESL services.

Fact:

International students are fee-paying students that are not eligible for publicly-funded education in British Columbia. Their educational programs in BC schools, including ESL services, must be funded by their tuition.

Myth 7:

The need for ESL support is like a disability.

Fact:

The need for ESL support indicates the student has a temporary language barrier to accessing the curriculum. It should not be treated like a lifelong disability.

Myth 8:

The years of ESL service have to be provided consecutively.

Fact:

ESL funding is provided for services that need not be scheduled for five consecutive years.

Myth 9:

To qualify for ESL services, students must be newcomer immigrants.

Fact:

English language learners may be immigrants or may be born in Canada.

Myth 10:

All students in ESL receive support for five years and ESL services are not provided after five years.

Fact:

Most students exit from ESL services prior to five years. For the few English language learners who need more than five years support, many districts continue to provide the support through reallocation of funding because the ESL supplement is not targeted.

For more information see the **ESL Policy** at: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/esl.htm and the **ESL Funding Policy** at: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/funding_esl.htm

Awareness of Cultural Differences

Awareness of cultural difference is important in schools and classrooms. The following chart presents some typical North American education practices that may differ from other cultural norms. Students from other cultures may need help in understanding and adapting to the new customs.

North American	Some Other Possibilities
Praise is overt.	Praise may be embarrassing.
Eye contact is expected.	Eye contact may be seen as rude.
Physical contact is usual, especially with younger children.	Physical contact might be taboo, especially between genders.
A polite or acceptable physical distance between people is 40-70 cm.	Physical distance is either much closer or much further apart.
Silence is never prolonged; an instant answer is expected.	Silence is comfortable and can imply thought.
Most feelings may be displayed but not necessarily acted upon.	Feelings must be hidden, or, in other cases, displayed with gusto.
Some personal topics can be discussed openly.	Taboo topics are highly variable and culturally defined.
Punctuality is prized.	Time is flexible.
Relative status is not emphasized.	Status may be very important.
Roles are loosely defined.	Role expectations may be strict.
Politeness is routine; lapses occur and are forgiven. Thank you is enough.	Politeness and proper conduct are paramount, especially in children.
Education is for everyone.	Education may be for males first.
Girls and boys are educated together.	Girls and boys might be educated separately.

Cross-Cultural Communication

Newcomers to Canada are trying to adapt but may not yet share Canadian cultural norms. Body language and communication style may confuse those who do not understand its meaning in the new cultural context. The following are some tips to facilitate communication:

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Write down key information (points, details)
- Keep your vocabulary and sentences direct and simple
- Avoid the use of metaphors, jargon or popular sayings
- Allow time for a response
- Support the student's efforts to communicate
- Check for comprehension frequently
- Repeat and paraphrase
- Be patient
- Use examples to illustrate your point
- Link verbal and visual cues
- Use visuals (e.g., diagrams, photographs) when possible
- Make sessions short and concise
- Avoid making assumptions; resist stereotyping

Spotlight

...on Ministry resources

Did you know that there are a number of helpful resources for teachers of English language learners?

Check them out at:

www.bced.gov.bc.ca/esl/

Some helpful resources:

Career/Life Transitions for Students with Diverse Needs: A Resource Guide for Schools

This Ministry of Education resource offers information about transitions for students with diverse needs, including English language learners: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/moe_clt_resource_rb0144.pdf

Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework

This Ministry of Education resource provides a framework to assist the school system in its ongoing efforts to create and maintain learning and working environments that are responsive to the diverse social and cultural needs of the communities it serves: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/diversity/diversity_framework.pdf

WelcomeBC

WelcomeBC is the Province of British Columbia's main website for immigration and settlement and includes helpful information for immigrants, service providers, and those wishing to find out more about immigration and settlement in the province: www.welcomebc.ca/en/index.html

...on district practices

Do you know about some of the outstanding things going on in the province?

If you have something you'd like highlighted in the "Spotlight", email us at:

EDUC.DiversityandEquity@gov.bc.ca

Pilot program for vulnerable immigrant youth in school

Some immigrant youth arrive in Canada with limited English language and little formal education. They may struggle with social and emotional difficulties. These issues may impact upon their integration into school life, community, and society. Eleven school districts have been taking part in a pilot program to expand their role in supporting these vulnerable immigrant students.

With funding from the Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development, school districts in Abbotsford, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Greater Victoria, Nanaimo-Ladysmith, New Westminster, Peace River North, Richmond, Surrey, and Vancouver have been taking part in this pilot for the last year. They have been providing enhanced services to better the outcomes of immigrant and refugee youth who are showing minimal success in learning and integration and may be at risk of prematurely leaving school. In New Westminster, for example, principals, teachers, and school staff are working collaboratively to support a youth worker who provides individual and group activities geared toward addressing the unique needs of vulnerable immigrant youth. In Burnaby, a youth worker provides specialized supports in conjunction with ESL classes and a career counsellor from MOSAIC Settlement Services. If you are working in one of the eleven participating districts and would like more information, please contact your board office.